



Without Offending Humans: A Critique of Animal Rights (Posthumanities) (French Edition)

Elisabeth de Fontenay

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A central thinker on the question of the animal in continental thought, Élisabeth de Fontenay moves in this volume from Jacques Derrida's uneasily intimate writing on animals to a passionate frontal engagement with political and ethical theory as it has been applied to animals—along with a stinging critique of the work of Peter Singer and Paola Cavalieri as well as with other “utilitarian” philosophers of animal–human relations.

Humans and animals are different from one another. To conflate them is to be intellectually sentimental. And yet, from our position of dominance, do we not owe them more than we often acknowledge? In the searching first chapter on Derrida, she sets out “three levels of deconstruction” that are “testimony to the radicalization and shift of that philosopher's argument: a strategy *through* the animal, exposition to an animal or to this animal, and compassion *toward* animals.” For Fontenay, Derrida's writing is particularly far-reaching when it comes to thinking about animals, and she suggests many other possible philosophical resources including Adorno, Leibniz, and Merleau-Ponty.

Fontenay is at her most compelling in describing philosophy's ongoing indifference to animal life—shading into savagery, underpinned by denial—and how attempts to exclude the animal from ethical systems have in fact demeaned humanity. But Fontenay's essays carry more than philosophical significance. *Without Offending Humans* reveals a careful and emotionally sensitive thinker who explores the unfolding of humans' assessments of their relationship to animals—and the consequences of these assessments for how we define ourselves.

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